

DADICATION



Discussion Guide to **Foster Professional Development of Staff**



This discussion guide is designed to foster professional development of staff at fatherhood programs and other programs that provide support for families and children. Fatherhood programs can use the discussion questions to inspire connection and understanding among individuals who work with fathers. The discussion guide can be used during a staff meeting or professional development opportunity.

Overview of Dadication

Involved fathers make essential contributions to their children's well-being, even when parenting during tough times and circumstances. That's what we at the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) call Dadication. We applaud and support all dads who show up for their kids, especially when parenting isn't easy.

The DADication documentary features fathers who appeared in our [Dadication PSAs](#) and includes additional testimony from fathers and fatherhood practitioners. The short documentary emphasizes how essential fathers are to the lives of their children, illustrates the impact of growing up without a father, provides examples of fathers overcoming numerous barriers to be present for their kids, and demonstrates how fathers and their children are flourishing as a result. Be ready to shed a tear as you hear their stories.

The documentary was produced by the Ad Council and Campbell Ewald in partnership with the NRFC and the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. You can download the video and other companion documents from the DADication documentary page at Fatherhood.gov.

NOTE TO PROGRAM LEADERS AND DISCUSSION FACILITATORS:

We recommend scheduling a time when all staff can be present to watch the short documentary. Choose one or two people to facilitate a group discussion using the discussion questions. The questions are arranged in the order in which the topic or quote comes up in the video. We provide specific time marks so you can either watch the whole movie before beginning your discussion, or you can choose to stop the video at specific points in order to cover a question immediately.

You can also switch up the order in which you cover the questions, based on the direction in which the conversation of your group flows, and choose whether to cover all or some of the questions depending on the time available and your program needs. And, of course, feel free to add other discussion questions to focus on different clips based on the interests and needs of your program or staff.

We include a section at the end of this document with links to NRFC resources that provide additional information and may be helpful in following up on specific issues or questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

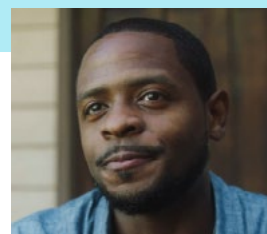
1. [1:20] In the opening scene, Durrell Lyons talks about how his kids learned to ride a bike even though he never learned how to do so. He says:

"I didn't teach them. I just created an environment where they taught themselves. All I had to do was be there."

DISCUSS: How does that message—that being there is a big part of being a dad—reinforce some of the concepts from our fatherhood program curricula?

DISCUSS: How does our program create an environment that encourages fathers to:

- a) Help their kids learn new skills?
- b) Be the best dad they can be for their kids?



2. [3:04] Armon Perry talks about how dads face many barriers and obstacles.

DISCUSS: What kinds of barriers is he talking about?

DISCUSS: What are the main challenges that dads in our community are facing?



3. [3:20] Kenneth Braswell (voiceover) talks about how incarceration, addiction, and/or having custodial parents who limit the time fathers spend with their children can make it difficult for fathers to re-engage with their children after a period of separation.

DISCUSS: How often do you see these kinds of barriers preventing fathers from re-engaging with their children?

DISCUSS: What other barriers do the fathers in our program face?

DISCUSS: How are we currently helping fathers overcome barriers like these?

DISCUSS: How could we adjust our services to better help fathers?



4. [4:01] Joseph Stiltner says:

"I missed so much with my first child because of addiction and the situation with his mother. It doesn't get easier to stay away, but it really feels like it gets harder to come back ... it's a guilt that I kinda live with every day."

DISCUSS: If our dads are experiencing this kind of guilt or shame, how do we help them move on from that?

DISCUSS: How could we do more to help fathers strengthen their relationship with their child's other parent?



5. [6:30] During the group discussion, Durrell Lyons says:

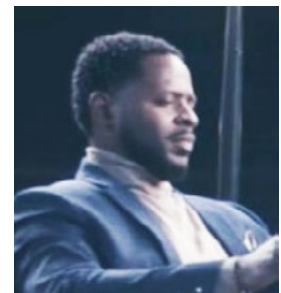
"I know men who are paying child support for their children, but don't necessarily have visitation rights. There's no system there to help keep the family together. There's a lot of systems in place to pull money from dad's pocket, but not necessarily to put dad back in the house."

DISCUSS: What systems is he referring to?

DISCUSS: How are we working with these systems to help fathers?

DISCUSS: Are there systems we could work more closely with? Which ones?

DISCUSS: Do we need to create new partnerships? If so, with whom?



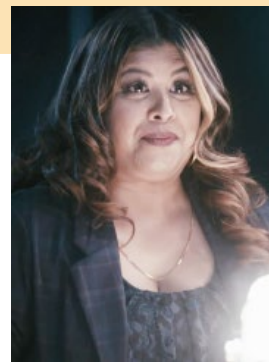
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6. **[7:40] Tina Naidoo, who works with fathers who have been incarcerated, talks about the difficulties formerly incarcerated fathers have experienced with finding housing, getting a job, and reconnecting with their children. She says [8:22]:**

"Nobody rents to them. There is nobody to give them a job because of their background. So how do you create a healthy stable living environment, how do you get your kids back? We spend a lot of time motivating our clients to stay in the game, to keep fighting, not to give up."

DISCUSS: How does our program help alleviate these barriers?

DISCUSS: Are we motivating our dads to "stay in the game?"

DISCUSS: In what ways could we do more?



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7. **[10:05] Juan Scalone talks about a special moment with his children:**

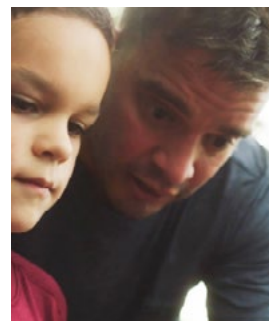
"When they see something new, and it just clicks in their brain, I just realized I could do this. You can just see [it] in their faces. It's such an incredible moment."

DISCUSS: When you're working with fathers in curriculum or peer support group sessions, have you had moments like that, where suddenly one or more of the fathers see something new or realize something important?

DISCUSS: If so, how do you feel when that happens?

DISCUSS: What do you think you did to help create that realization for fathers?

DISCUSS: Could you help fathers create those moments with their children?



8. **[10:38] Durrell Lyons talks about a time when he wasn't taking care of himself:**

"That depression ended up rolling downhill. My wife was critically depressed, and it emptied into my daughter ... [I was] coming down on her hard for stuff that's really not her fault."

[11:20] He goes on to explain that he finally figured out he was the one with the problem and realized:

"It's not about me. Whatever happens to me and affects me mentally and physically, it's gonna run downhill. And my children are part of that hill."

DISCUSS: What's your reaction to that clip?

DISCUSS: How are we helping fathers who are depressed or grappling with more serious mental health issues?

DISCUSS: How can we help fathers recognize when they need help, so their struggles don't adversely affect their parenting?



[NOTE TO FACILITATORS: To continue this discussion about depression, you could go from here to questions 11–14.]

9. **[11:41] Kenneth Braswell says:**

"Everything we do is about the well-being of children."

DISCUSS: How does father involvement improve child well-being?

DISCUSS: How does our program work to improve child well-being?

DISCUSS: How do we tell that story?

DISCUSS: Could we capture more data to tell that story better?



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10. [11:48] Cosette Bowles describes how disputes between parents (e.g., about custody of their children or payment of child support) can have a negative impact on child well-being.

"I think that's really important. This is not a fight, it's not a contest where somebody wins and somebody loses, except your children."

DISCUSS: How do we talk with our clients about challenges in coparenting relationships?

DISCUSS: What more could we do to include custodial parents in our program activities?

[Prompt: Could we reach out to custodial parents and explain how we are helping fathers work on their coparenting skills? Could we offer some coparenting workshops for custodial parents? Could we include them and their coparent in the same coparenting skills workshop?]



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11. [12:31] Kenneth Braswell asks:

"Where do we [men] go for help? Who do we ask when we're feeling vulnerable?"

DISCUSS: What kind of help do we provide the dads in our program?

DISCUSS: Do our dads need additional help? If so, what type of help do they need?



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12. [13:07] Cosette Bowles talks about how women tend to be better at connecting with each other, but men don't seem to have the same kind of supportive relationships with other men.

DISCUSS: Do you think it's true that men are not as good at asking each other for help?

DISCUSS: How can we help men get better at asking for help?

DISCUSS: Are we doing enough to encourage peer support among our dads? If not, what specific things should we be doing?



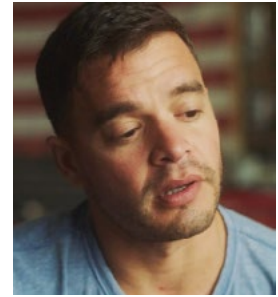
13. [13:35] Juan Scalone says:

"As a dad, as a male, sometimes you feel alone."

DISCUSS: What does Juan mean by feeling alone?

DISCUSS: How do we help fathers express these kinds of feelings?

[Prompt: Could feelings like these be connected to deeper feelings of depression?]



NRFC Resources

Check out these resources to find additional information or answer questions that may arise during your discussions.

- [Connected to Others is a Good Place to be: Helping Fathers Build their Social Capital](#)
- [Spotlight on Building Social Capital: Tips for Fatherhood Practitioners](#)
- [SIMPLER Solutions for Fatherhood Programs](#)
- [Engaging Fathers: Tools and Tips to Assess the Father-Friendliness of your Organization](#)
- [Spotlight on Research: Strengthening Coparenting Relationships among Low-Income, Unmarried Parents](#)
- [Parenting Time and Child Support: Information for Fatherhood Programs and Fathers](#)
- [Working with Child Welfare Agencies to Improve Outcomes for Families \[Webinar\]](#)
- [Working with the Child Welfare System](#)

This discussion guide was developed by Nigel Vann at Fathers Incorporated and Diego Quezada at MDRC, with assistance from Dina Israel (MDRC) and Dzu Bui (The Ad Council), on behalf of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.

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